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N.B.—All Communications should reach the Editor, Ardeevin, Cadogan Park, Belfast, not later than the 16th of the month preceding publication.

"Morality and Mediocrity."

The word mediocrity sounds a note of depreciation. To call a person mediocre is to give him a position bordering upon contempt. Yet this should not be so. Habitual usage has imparted into the word more than its primary meaning implied. When we would voice the needs of the average man, or seek to elicit the opinions of the man in the street, we are really aiming at mediocrity. Thus, the mediocre man is the man of moderate or middling calibre or capacity.

So regarded, mediocrity is the basis of much that is important in human affairs. If we may accept the testimony of St. Paul, the early Christians were mediocre men and women. This, at least, is the simple conclusion to be drawn from his words: "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." That is to say, the Christian class was chiefly constituted of the mediocre. If the recognition of that fact was intended as a warning against self-glorification, it also served, and was intended to serve, as an encouragement. We desire to enforce this encouraging aspect of mediocrity.

Consider how the modern treatment of history makes good the claims of the mediocre for sympathetic treatment. When J. R. Green issued his "Short History of the English People," the title was seen to be significant. History, it seemed to affirm, is not the achievements of the eminent and the mighty—of monarchs or of militaristic adventurers—but of the *People*. All later historical treatment tends to affirm the same fact. If we would rightly portray the significant features of an historical era or race, we must make plain the thoughts, the ideals, the endeavours of average or mediocre persons. These, as we now believe, are the very texture of the corporate life of a community.

It is, however, in the moral realm that mediocrity finds its truest affinity, as well as its strongest incentive. One of the greatest of ethical teachers of ancient time, Aristotle, defined virtue as consisting essentially in a habit of choosing the mean, i.e., of taking a middle course between the two extremes of excess and defect. The place thus assigned to the mean in morality may be compared with that held by the mediocre in society. The parallel is more than a verbal one—it is one of actual fact. Without any depreciation of the superlative achievements of the saintly few, the morality of a community is made up of, and determined by, the deeds of the mediocre many.

To recognise clearly the fact is to be made aware of a great opportunity. Jesus divined it long ago when to a small number of mediocre men he spoke the encouraging words: "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." Amazing as the utterance may have seemed, it is not the language of hyperbole but of literal fact. The constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven corresponds in this respect to the kingdoms of earth—it rests upon the citizenship of mediocre men and women.

Notes of the Month

The Annual Sermons and Meeting of the Ulster Unitarian Christian Association are arranged for the 3rd and 4th of April respectively. An interesting experiment is to be tried. Instead of both services being held in the First Church, Belfast, as heretofore, only the Morning Service is fixed for that Church, the Evening Service having been arranged for Comber, through the hearty co-operation of our Congregation there. Also, the Annual Meeting of the Association will be held in Comber on April 4th. The Special Preacher in Belfast and Comber is the Rev. Herbert Barnes, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and he will also speak at the Annual Meeting. The difficulties created by Curfew Law will doubtless prevent many persons from Belfast attending the Comber gatherings, but we hope that the latter will attract many persons from our churches round about County Down, and ensure the success of the experiment.

* *

An important historical event which falls on the 16th April is the Quatercentenary of the appearance of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms. No recent happenings have lessened the value of that signal expression of courage and independence which Luther gave on that historic occasion. To recall it is to realise not only the world's indebtedness to such an example of human intrepidity, but to perceive how great is the need of such a spirit and stand to-day on behalf of truth of conscience and integrity of life.

* *

We are very glad to be able to announce that the editor of "The Inquirer," the Rev. W. G. Tarrant, B.A., has very kindly accepted the invitation sent to him to deliver the Annual Lecture on the occasion of the meetings of the Non-Subscribing Church in June. He will be a very worthy and acceptable successor to the men who have in previous years filled the position of lecturer.

* *

Quite recently another distinguished member of our household of faith was in Belfast as lecturer. This was Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.A., of Liverpool. Her family is too well known in the annals of Liverpool Unitarianism and civic life to need mention. But those who heard Miss Rathbone speak last month, before the members of the Belfast Women Citizens' Union, on the place and importance of women in modern life realised how felicitously she spoke from a wide and intimate knowledge of her subject. The interest created by her visit, and the impression made by her personality, are calculated to do a great deal of good in Belfast, especially in view of the coming elections and the responsibilities of women voters.

* *

In our advertising pages particulars are given of a Bazaar which is to be held on April 21st and 22nd, in the Central Hall, Belfast. This is a long-projected and carefully prepared-for effort of the Mountpottinger Congregation to raise a sum of money designed to form an Endowment Fund. We trust that this praiseworthy object will be supported by many members of other congregations, and thus make possible the attainment of the desired end. Some years ago the North and East Lancashire Unitarian Mission encouraged several of its congregations to make similar efforts for individual endowment funds. The result more than justified the advice given. To-day some of the congregations that then manifested enterprise and self-help are amongst the most flourishing in the Unitarian body. A too-large endowment sometimes discourages the efforts of present-day members. A moderate endowment supplements rather than stifles the latter's efforts and frees them from the anxieties contingent upon the constant need for the most careful economy. We understand that our Mountpottinger friends are aiming at the golden mean, and we wish them every success in their laudable effort.

John Knox's Liturgy.

The Belfast papers recently published a letter signed by the Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore, and by the Moderator of the General Assembly, calling for a Sabbath to be devoted as a day of prayer for Christian Union. We are aware that a movement is on foot to unite the Presbyterian and Episcopalian Churches, and it is very probable that the Lambeth Appeal had this in view as part of its consideration. A section of the Methodists has shown an inclination for such a union in England ; but it is here in the North of Ireland, where the barrier of Church Establishment is broken down, and Presbyterian ministers have preached from the pulpit in Belfast Cathedral, that such union might first be brought about.

In the mind of the average Presbyterian the fundamental difference is, that the Episcopalian reads his prayers from a Prayer Book, while his own minister gets them out of his head, perhaps his heart also. He is rather surprised when told that in the beginning Presbyterians had their Liturgy, and that in the week-day services in St. Giles', Edinburgh, a Liturgy is in use.

Dr. John Campbell has made reference to " the old Scottish Confession of Faith, drawn up in 1550 by Knox and some of his associates," and describes it, quoting a passage from it, as being drawn up in a spirit which was admirable, and if the sentence quoted really meant what is said, that was true. Dr. Campbell would claim that as the primary document on which the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church has been built. The writer, however, has before him the book known as " John Knox's Liturgy," otherwise " The Book of Common Order," adopted by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1564. This professes to be a reprint of the complete copy. (Glasgow University Press, 1886). The liberal passage quoted does not appear here, in " The Confession of Faith, Used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneva. Received and approved by the Church of Scotland." Candidly, the writer does not consider it an ancestry to be proud of. Harsh, bitter, cruel, vindictive and narrow, there is little of the gentleness and the love of Jesus in it. " The Monastery " and " The Abbot " of Sir Walter Scott bring us, under his magic spell, into the atmosphere of that age, when better was it " that women should weep than strong men," as Knox himself retorted to Mary's tears. Had it not been for the Scottish barons, who had still a vein of conservatism, every vestige of the old faith would have been swept out of existence, for soon they found that if the old religion had been too latitudinarian, and the Church had grown too negligent and easy-going, to its own destruction, they were now confronted in a new form with a priest tyranny under the name of presbytery, such as they had not known before. The merry-makings and the festivities of the past were to give place to dourness and deadly dullness, to a rigid fatalism and a terror of hell-fire, from which few were predestined to escape.

" We ought not sa meikle to luke what men before us have said and done," refers only to Catholic ceremonial and church-order. It does not mean freedom from creeds, for the very Confession itself is only an amplification of the Creeds, with the changes of doctrine brought about by the Reformation. Woe betide the presumptuous thinker who dare challenge a sentence of it, for a terrible form of Excommunication was in readiness for him, and that applied to one who dared even to cross the threshold of a Roman Catholic Chapel.

If a man were accused of murder and acquitted by the magistrate, yet if the congregation or his own conscience deemed him guilty, " he may be admitted to the hearing of the Word, but in no wyse to participatioun of prayeris, nether befor or efter the sermon. The murtherar man shall stand three several Sundayis in a publike place before the church dore bare-futed and bareheaded, cled in a base and abject

apparrell, having the same weapen which he used in the murther, or the lyke, bloody in his hand." The poor unfortunate girl, more sinned against than sinning, had to sit on a stool, facing the whole congregation. Little humanity, little tenderness or consideration was to be got from the old Scotch Presbyterianism. Their religion was that of the law, not of the Gospel. They have passed on to us an efficient form of Church Government, but Knox despised all claim to Apostolic Succession, and ordination disappeared with the Catholic Episcopacy, to be revived later on in its Presbyterial form. The struggle really was for intellectual liberty, and not yet has the battle been really won; but it has involved brutality, and contempt for all that is beautiful, romantic, idealistic, and it is the dim consciousness of this that gives the response in these later days to the overtures of Episcopacy.

ULLIN.

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

Perhaps no legislation of recent years has been more far-reaching in its effects than the Act enforcing insurance against sickness, etc., of persons between the ages of 16 and 65 engaged in remunerative occupation with a maximum earning capacity of £250 per annum. Every week brings more young people within the scope of this Act, and it is very desirable that these should all join an "approved society" which costs them nothing above the stamps on their cards. Young people connected with our Congregations would do well to consider joining a Society of repute, and we strongly recommend the Union Friendly Society, of which Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., is President. We understand that the Chairman of Committee and four members of that body are connected with our own denomination, so that those connected with our Churches can be sure of their interests being thoroughly safeguarded Further particulars will be found in our advertising columns.

Memorial Notice

MR. WILLIAM KELL.

The death of Mr. William Kell took place on Wednesday, 2nd March, at his residence, Dunkell, Donegall Park, after a protracted and very severe illness. Our deceased friend was a life-long member of the Old Presbyterian Congregation of Templepatrick, having been baptised into that Communion by the late Rev. Robert Campbell sixty-four years ago; and by virtue also of a keen interest which he manifested in the affairs of that church up to the time of his death. On 1st June, 1900, he married Isabel, only surviving daughter of the late Dr. John Dundee, of Hillmount, Carnmoney, and on taking up his residence in Donegall Park he became attached to the First Presbyterian Congregation, Rosemary Street, Belfast. For a period of ten years he continued his residence there, during which time he occupied the position of Honorary Treasurer to the Orphan Society of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians and Other Free Christians. Yielding to a strong desire for country life and having at all times a deep interest in farming pursuits, he moved to Camp Lodge, near Lisburn, a place of many acres, which offered him ample opportunity of gratifying his every wish in this respect. The demands, however, which this extra undertaking made upon his time and strength proved to be too much for him, and in December, 1917, he came back to his former residence in Donegall Park, deciding to stay there until a more suitable place in the country should offer itself. This hope was never realised. In January, 1919, he was stricken down with paralysis, from which he never recovered. His life had been a very busy and active one. In business he was managing director of Messrs. Hugh White & Co., Belfast, and his connection with the firm extended over a period of forty-eight years. He was a member of the Masonic Order. His charities, always private, and his acts of benevolence, always cordially generous, were more in number and greater than many people knew.

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THE INQUIRER

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Preaching in the Old Meeting House, Templepatrick, on Sunday, 6th March, Rev. A. Turner said—The loss which this congregation has sustained in the death of Mr. William Kell is great beyond measure. To tell his story adequately and all that it means for us, would be to write a history of the congregation for the last forty years. During that time we have passed through many and varied experiences, and have attempted and achieved many difficult things which but for his courage and support might easily have caused us to falter. Our congregation always worked unanimously, and where all were concerned it would scarcely be just to make mention only of a few; but I am quite sure that all will unreservedly agree that throughout all our activities William Kell was a leading and outstanding personality. The second son of the late Joseph Kell, of The Trench, Mallusk, Co. Antrim, he was born into our Congregation and belonged to it by both sides of the house, his mother being Jane Kelso, another old family in connection with the same Church. At a very early date he commenced to make his presence felt in the Old Congregation of Templepatrick. About the year 1880 he was secretary when the late Rev. Robert Campbell was resigning the active phase of his ministry, and at this time aided by a number of earnest and competent young men of the Congregation, he and they brought about a partial but very important renovation of the Old Meeting House. The same young men with Mr. Kell in their midst seized their opportunity, though almost at the last moment, and included our congregation in the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster's Sustentation Fund. Many of you will remember how in 1887-1888 land was purchased in our village and a substantial Manse erected thereupon, and you will remember the part he played in that, for us, great undertaking. In 1902 he witnessed the further renovation of the Meeting-House, the completion of the work he had been interested in in 1880, giving us our Meeting-House in its present beautiful form. In 1912 he committed to our care and keeping that beautiful window erected by himself to the memory of his father and mother, and sister Ellen. His work came out of his faith. He believed the doctrine taught in this Church, believed that it was right and true, and he endeavoured to live by it. None could appreciate better than he a kindness, but it must be recorded of him in this respect that he preferred rather to give than to receive. He knew four ministers in Templepatrick and to each one he was a staunch friend. May God raise up more like him in our midst.

The Service concluded with the Dead March in Saul.

The funeral of the late Mr. William Kell took place on 5th March, from Dunkell, Castle Avenue, Donegall Park, to Mallusk burying-ground, where the remains were interred. The officiating clergymen were Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D. (First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street), and Rev. Alfred Turner (Templepatrick). The chief mourners were Messrs. James Bell (Dublin), Alexander M. Bell (Manchester), J. J. Bell, William Joseph Kell, William Thompson, J. A. Thompson, and James Campbell (nephews). Representing the firm of which Mr. Kell had been the head were Mr. S. Duffy (director), Mr. R. Duffy (commercial representative), with the members of the office staff and other employees.

Wild White Clover.

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"The New Testament and Modern Life."

Our readers will always welcome a new book by Dr. Mellone, not only because of his well-known depth of thought and clearness in the expression of it, but also because we regard him as one of ourselves, remembering the part he took in the formation of our Church and his successful ministry at Holywood. In "The New Testament and Modern Life" he deals with a subject of great present interest in a fresh, lucid and convincing manner. Dr. Mellone insists upon the need of understanding the religious history of the period in which the New Testament was written, not for the purpose of explaining away hard sayings, but in order to get at the principles of permanent truth, thus avoiding the literalism so often involved in the "Back to Jesus" movement.

After a brief introductory chapter explaining his aim and method, Dr. Mellone proceeds to examine the central thoughts of Jesus, the Fatherhood of God and the absolute value of every human soul, the Brotherhood of Man and the ideal of Universal Love, the Kingdom of God and its coming. This portion of the book is an admirable example of concise yet thorough exegesis and will repay careful study. This is followed by a valuable chapter on the social and political conditions in the time of Jesus, then, in the light of this historical knowledge, the teaching of Jesus is again examined and its bearing on modern conditions brought out. In this, the most important chapter in the book, Dr. Mellone avoids alike the extremes of Tolstoyism and the watering down of Christianity which robs it of its distinctive meaning and value, answering the same question with the same conclusion, though from a different viewpoint, as Dr. Wicksteed's "Is Christianity Practical?"

Though the bulk of the book is taken up with the actual teaching of Jesus, the final chapter deals with the ethical and social teaching of the Apostolic Age, and in it will be found useful aids to the study of the Epistles and Revelation.

The general trend of the book may be gathered from the Conclusion, in which Dr. Mellone says, "The truth is, that Jesus has presented to the world ideal principles which must be re-interpreted from age to age; and in the New Testament books we see several stages of this re-interpretation actually taking place, as required by the changing conditions of the world. . . This is our final answer to the question regarding the applicability of the Christian Ideal to present-day life. We penetrate beneath the surface of each, and see what forces are really working there. The relation of Christianity to the present world is indeed the supreme moral problem of this age; but what do we mean by the expression 'moral problem'? In any concrete case of duty, individual or social, there is in the real world outside us some concrete situation, some actual state of affairs which demands a certain line of action. There are thus two questions: What is the actual situation? and, What action is required to meet its demands? The second is a moral question in the ordinary sense; the first takes us beyond the range of morality as ordinarily understood."

Embodied in the text there are many extremely suggestive and apposite quotations, while the appendix will be found of inestimable value to those who wish to delve further into the subject for themselves.

G.L.P.

If this whole world followed you,
Followed to the letter;
Would it be a nobler world,
All deceit and falsehood hurled
From it altogether?
Tell me, if it followed you,
Would the world be better?

—SELECTED.

DEATHS.

LUSK—On February 21st, 1921, at Stonybrae, Killyglen, Cairncastle, Co. Antrim, Thomas Lusk, aged 87 years.

M'GUCKIN—On March 11th, 1921, at Ballygally, Cairncastle, Co. Antrim, Mary M'Guckin (child of William M'Guckin, aged 5 weeks.

Young People's Page.

"THE JOY OF VISION."

Nearly twenty-five years ago there died a successful teacher, Henry Drummond by name, who delighted in all the sights of nature. On one occasion he spoke most gratefully of one who in early life had taught him to see. That did not mean, as we might suppose, that he was once physically blind. Rather, are we to understand this: He had belonged to that large class of people to some of whom Jesus said many years ago: "Having eyes, see ye not?" Such men were really blind to many of the most marvellous sights about them. They needed to have their eyes opened to beauty and wonder and rejoice in what they saw.

In olden times there were men who were called "Seers" because they had a power of vision unknown to ordinary persons. Not only were they aware of obvious truths, able to see the wonderful in the ordinary, but they could discover hidden meanings and bring to light and life concealed beauty. These so-called Seers taught ordinary men to see with their eyes, to rejoice with them in their glad recognition of the beauty and the wonder of life. Such a one was John Ruskin who, as Henry Drummond gratefully acknowledged, taught him to see. And in these modern days the power and the joy of vision have been made possible for all by many teachers who possessed the open vision.

There is the verse of a hymn sung in many of our churches which makes plain how great and how good are the opportunities of those who can truly see:

"Father! Thy wonders do not simply stand,
Nor far removed where feet have seldom strayed;
Around us ever lies the enchanted land,
In marvels rich to thine own sons displayed."

Is it not a fact that there are many things of beauty to see around us every day on every side? There are all the marvels of the springtime unfolding before us at the present time. Although the re-appearing sights of field and garden and hedgerow are the common things of every spring yet they never lose their appeal or power to please the eye.

In one respect, however, they may and should gain rather than lose by their re-appearance. If we gain in power of vision, if we learn to see more truly and more completely, every springtime means greater appreciation and fuller joy. There is no power which needs, or which is more caapble of, development than the power of vision. To possess that is to have at our daily service infinite sources of beauty, and to draw from Nature's store-house treasures new and old.

We have known teachers in our North of Ireland Sunday Schools who have taken out their scholars into the the country and stimulated their ability to see by asking them to count and name varieties of wild flowers, to observe the buds on the trees, and the grasses on the bank. In all these aspects of Nature there is infinite variety of sight and satisfaction for the seeing eye. Or, again, there are few days when the colours and forms of the clouds do not afford a wonderful spectacle of shape and symmetry. Some of the most beautiful of natural combinations and contrasts are formed in the month of April. What has been called "the uncertain glory of an April day" is one of the most wonderful and appealing of natural things. Make a practice of noting something every day in April, and you will be astonished at Nature's unending resources of form and colour. Unlike history, Nature never really repeats herself. There is always something unique, unlike anything which she did before. Test this for yourselves in the petals of the common flowers, the forms of blades of grass, the size and shapes of the leaves of the trees. Become seers and servants of natural beauty, and thus get increasing joy out of God's works.

Lesson Notes.

[In accordance with the Scheme for 1921, prepared by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.]

April 3rd Review.

April 10th His family opposition. Read Mark iii. 20-35. Key text, Mark iii. 35.

1. *"He is beside Himself."* The wonderful words and gracious deeds of Jesus led to an ever-increasing popularity, but his friends were alarmed, and said, "He is beside himself," or, in other words, "He is mad." Verse 31 is very strong evidence that the "friends" who said this were his mother and brothers. [For *elder scholars*, the fact that his mother failed to understand the meaning of our Lord's work is very hard to reconcile with the birth stories, according to which she knew that he was to do great and wonderful things. It is far too often the case, that those nearest to us are the most anxious to keep us from being as good as we want to be. Note, for instance, how not only Jesus' mother and brothers, but the folk who lived round him at Nazareth, mocked at him, and said, "Is not this the carpenter?" Familiarity breeds contempt. Folk are usually so foolish that they never seem to expect that ordinary folk—like themselves (and Jesus was, from their point of view, ordinary—like themselves) will or even ought to, do great and good work. And anyone who tries to be a little more of a Christian than his friend is called a fool or mad. For instance, perhaps the truest Christian who ever lived in Belfast was Vere Foster, who gave away all his great fortune to help others, and lived in poverty. Yet many folk, who thought themselves very clever because they were selfish, regarded him as mad. The lesson to be drawn is not that children should be conceited and disobedient to their parents, but rather that they should always try to be truly Christian, even though their parents are astonished and their friends rude. Jesus was an obedient son, and when he became a man he went forth to do his heavenly Father's work, even though he had no encouragement from his friends.

2. *The accusation of the Scribes.* These men were far more insulting than Jesus' family. They saw that he could cast out devils, *i.e.*, soothe and heal those who were epileptics, paralytics, lunatics, etc. Obviously only a great and good man could do this. But they said that it was because Jesus was so bad that he overcame bad things. Jesus soon showed them how mean and foolish they were by asking them the plain question: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Wickedness would not lead a man to do good, for if it did he would not be wicked.

3. *The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.* In simple words, this means that those folk who deliberately refuse to believe in what is good are the worst of enemies—far worse tham ignorant men who do not yet know what is good. There is hope for all of us to become better, no matter how often we fail, so long as we really want to do good, and not merely get our own way.

4. *Jesus' family.* Jesus rebukes his mother and brethren for doubting him by declaring that "whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, sister, and mother." He did not cast off his family: far from it. He carried his love for those nearest so far as to include all those who tried to be the children of the heavenly Father. That is what we have to do. We have to love all those who try and whom we can help to be good, as if they were our brothers and sisters, as indeed they are, because we are all children of our Father in heaven.

April 17. A Parable of the Kingdom. Read Mark iv. 1-20. Key text, Luke xvii. 21.

1. *The sower.* This is the beginning of our Lord's parables, and expresses all the essential teaching of the meaning of the kingdom of God. The soil in which the seed is sown represents the heart of man in its attitude to Christ's teaching. It is all important to remember that the kingdom is a spiritual thing. Unless the heart is right there can be no change in outside things; but when, in the words of our text,

"the kingdom of God is within you," then it will soon reveal itself round about us. For younger scholars, take the hymn, "A little kingdom I possess."

2. *The seed by the wayside.* This represents those people who have no room whatever for goodness. So used have they got to doing what is foolish, selfish, and wicked that any chance of doing good is missed by them entirely. The evil in them at once snatches up the good and makes it vain. Thus, suppose one of these folk saw someone needing help, he would not realize that this was an opportunity for doing a good turn, but would make it an occasion for mockery. It is for us to take care that we do not so get into foolish, selfish, and wicked habits that reformation becomes practically impossible.

3. *The rocky ground.* This represents those folk who do not miss opportunities of doing good, but have too little goodness (good soil) in them to carry them far. At bottom, they are selfish, foolish and wicked. Thus they may run up to help (just as the corn sprang up), but when they find it inconvenient to do all that is necessary they will just go away (their intention, like the corn, will die away because they have no root). These are the shallow people.

4. *Among the thorns.* This represents those in whom goodness and badness are mixed. Thus they want to be generous, but they also want to keep their money; they want to be pure, but their passions are strong; they want to be helpful, but they are too fond of their comfort. Hence all the good they try to do is spoilt, because they have not first uprooted the thorns of selfishness, folly and wisdom.

5. *The good ground.* This represents those who not only have good intentions, but who really love goodness above all things. When they see an opportunity of doing good they make the most of it, so that it will often bring forth an hundredfold. Thus a kind word or a kind deed at the right time will be the beginning of great happiness and usefulness for those who otherwise would be miserable and useless.

April 24. Jesus attacks the Pharisees. Read Mark vii. 1-15. Key text, Psalm li. 10.

1. *Defiled hands.* Before every meal the Pharisees and all the Jews wash their hands thoroughly. This, of course, is an excellent habit; but the Pharisees had made it far more important than many much more important things. It was almost a case of cleanliness before godliness. The result was that, instead of listening to Jesus because of his great goodness, they mocked him because he allowed his disciples to eat with defiled, *i.e.*, unwashen hands. The fact was, the Pharisees were so much occupied with outside appearances that they never looked at the heart. Thus Jesus called them hypocrites, meaning that they only pretended to love God, when what they really loved was their own little habits. They are like the little girl in the story, who had a Bible given to her, and who carefully brought it out of its tissue paper and wrappings a year later to show that she had kept it *quite clean.* But she had not used it, she had put cleanliness before godliness.

2. *The commandment of God and the tradition of men.* The example Jesus gives is this: God's command is, "Honour thy father and mother." But the Pharisees would follow the tradition of men by setting money on one side as "Corban," which means "given to God," then they would say to their old parents, "We are very sorry that we cannot help you, but all our spare money is devoted to God and His temple." Thus do they defeat God's beneficent command. It is like coming to church regularly and putting money on the plate, and then never lending a helping hand to those in need.

3. *What defiles a man?* Jesus declared that the chief thing is to trouble about those things that really do us harm, and unclean thoughts in the heart do the most harm in the world. "Create in me a clean heart, O God," should be our prayer. First things first. If we are clean within we shall be sure to do good.

Child Welfare Work

George Macdonald writes :—

"Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into here."

What sort of welcome do we prepare for the baby? Let us take a few figures as illustration. The infant death rate in Londonderry in 1919 was 123 per 1,000; in Belfast, 113. In 1915, before organised Child Welfare work started, the rates were :—Londonderry 142, and Belfast 137. As 1915 was not an especially unhealthy year, it is fair to conclude the decrease in the case of Belfast, 24 per 1,000, was due to some other cause. This may in part be found in the establishment of Child Welfare centres, the outcome of voluntary work extended under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act. Local authorities have the power to establish Child Welfare centres, half the expense being paid from the rates, the rest from a Treasury grant. In England, a Belfast woman, Dr. Marion Andrews, has been able to reduce the infant death rate in Worcester, a not very healthy city, to 60 per 1,000.

Newry was the first town in Ulster to start Child Welfare work. There is a Health Visitor and a Medical Officer. The Health Visitor paid during the year 4,570 visits, and 210 mothers and 138 infants received treatment. The treatment at the Centre is not only "physicking": advice is given; there is friendly talk with the doctor and nurse, a cup of tea, and a good gossip; a party at Christmas perhaps, and an excursion in summer. The pre-natal work is of great value, for many deaths of infants are due to pre-natal neglect, arising from ignorance or poverty. For the five years before the introduction of the scheme, the average infant death rate in Newry was 118 per 1,000. The figures for the past five years give an average of 87, in 1918 as low as 64. Thus Newry has decreased the infant death rate by 31 per 1,000. This decrease, if attainable for the whole of Ireland, would mean the lives of over 2,000 infants saved every year. Let us bear these figures in mind when we kneel in church on Holy Innocents' Day.

What has this reduction of the infant death rate cost Newry? Just one penny farthing in the £ on the rates, or a total increase of £166 8s. 8d. Five farthings increase on the rates—what were those words about sparrows the value of whose tiny lives could be estimated only in farthings? Belfast spends £2,750 on Child Welfare, rather less than two farthings in the £, to use our former standard. Even so, the average for four years, including the influenza year, shows a decrease of 13 per 1,000. The infant death rate is an index to the infant sickness rate. For every baby who dies, a certain number live to grow up physically handicapped, to drift into casual employment, sickness benefit, or the workhouse. It would be cheaper to spend a little more money, and bring the Belfast death rate nearer to the Worcester figure. This would have meant a saving of 550 lives last year.

It is nevertheless good that over thirty towns in Ulster have adopted the Child Welfare scheme, and there is a general decrease in mortality rates. This would have been greater but for the influenza and the congested housing conditions. A good beginning has been made. If more money can be obtained and the milk question really grappled with, there should soon be an immense improvement.

"Where did you get them, the darling things?"

asks George Macdonald, thinking of the baby's rosy, dimpled feet.

"From the same box as the angels' wings,"

is the reply. A woman doctor said once, "How many a mother, poor, overworked, untaught, ignorant of everything that concerns her, has gone in her loneliness seeking and has found for her baby, not feet, but wings; and the wings have borne the tiny being away from earth back to the Everywhere whence it came." It is well for the baby whose wings have borne it from this sad world to that Kingdom of Heaven which is ever open to the little ones. But the house on earth is left unto the mother desolate.

DORA MELLONE.

Obituary

Mr. DANIEL BLAIR.

On Saturday, March 12th, the mortal remains of Mr. Daniel Blair, Custom Officer, were removed from his residence, 5 Nightingale Place, Woolwich, London, for interment in Woolwich Cemetery. The deceased gentleman contracted a cold which developed into pneumonia. The announcement of his death, which occurred on March the 2nd, came as a shock to his friends in Ireland. The late Mr. Blair served in the capacity of an Excise Officer in Belfast and London, and only a few years ago he retired from the Civil Service. He was a man who took a keen interest in the civic life of the nation and all the schemes for the welfare of humanity, an enthusiastic reader of literature, and his judgment was much appreciated by his friends. The late Mr. Blair was a most moral man, and upright in all his dealings. He was of a retiring disposition, and held in high esteem by those who had the privilege of his acquaintance. He was a native of Ballyvallough, Raloo, Co. Antrim, and took an interest in the Sunday School and Church of his boyhood. He subscribed generously to its funds when his help was solicited. His brother, the late Rev. Francis Blair, Templepatrick, predeceased him some years ago. To his only surviving sister and relatives we tender our respectful sympathy, commending them to him who raiseth them that are bowed down. The Rev. J. M'Cleery, of Raloo, conducted the funeral service in the house and in the Nonconformist Chapel, and at the graveside.

Mr. JAMES NELSON.

Mr. James Nelson, formerly of Ballysnod, latterly of Ballyvernstown, passed away with great suddenness on 5th March. He had been in Larne on the previous day and held a conversation with the writer in his usual bright, vivacious and friendly manner. Second son of the late Alex. Nelson, he was one of a family of four sons and four daughters. He leaves in Ireland two sisters, one an almost helpless invalid; and two brothers in America. He was a man of marked personality, most conscientious in matters of religion and politics, served his Congregation in early life as a Sunday School teacher, and for the last few years as our Junior Elder. Needless to say, his funeral to his ancestral parish of Kilwaughter on Monday, 7th March, was immense, and that the customary tokens of respect, including Chopin's "Funeral March," were rendered on the succeeding Sunday to a sorrowing assemblage in the Old Presbyterian Church.

Reports

Belfast— 1st Church.—The Sunday School Annual Party was held in the Central Hall, March 2nd. The proceedings began with tea, served by Miss M'Calmont, the Misses Hewitt and Parker. At 7-30 the chair was taken by the Minister (Rev. H. J. Rossington), and a full and varied programme was entered upon. The younger children, who had been carefully trained by Miss Lizzie Hewitt and Mrs. M'Fadden (nee Steel), admirably rendered with appropriate action a Canadian Boat Song. Later the two-mentioned ladies gave a spirited performance of "The Crystal Gazer." "Granny's Picture," in which Sadie Martin and Betty M'Neill were the two characters, was capitally portrayed. Other excellent items were recitations by Miss Nellie Gordon, a song by Mrs. M'Fadden, and a pianoforte duet by Miss Doris M'Crum and Miss Edna Kennedy, all of which were greatly appreciated by the large audience. Not the least inportant feature was the distribution of the prizes by the Minister and Mr. Robert M'Crum, the devoted Superintendent of the School. The fifty or more prizes included four of a special character, given for practically complete attendance to the four recipients. The Chairman spoke of the excellent work done, and bore testimony to the faithful work of the Superintendent and Teachers. The Benediction brought to a close a very enjoyable anniversary, the attendance at which was excellent and encouraging.

Belfast Domestic Mission. — On Saturday, February 5th, an Invitation

Tea and Social was arranged and catered for by the Boys' Club. About 50 young people responded to the invitations issued and a thoroughly enjoyable evening wae spent. Two outstanding features of the programme were the Advertisement and Post Card Competitions, for which suitable prizes were given for the highest number of correct answers.

Our third "Drawing Room Party" took place on Thursday, March 3rd, when 150 members and friends were present. Refreshments were served, after which the chair was taken by Mr. C. J. M'Kisack. A very enjoyable programme was entered upon, contributed to by the Misses Millen and A. Hagan, Rev. M. Watkins, Master G. Hagan and the Missionary. Two Dutch songs and dances were also contributed by two young friends, to the great delight and appreciation of all. After the proposal of the customary vote of thanks, the Benediction, pronounced by Rev. M. Watkins, brought to a close a very happy evening.

On Saturday, March 5th, the Senior Girls arranged an Invitation Tea and Social. About 50 friends sat down to tea. During the evening games and musical items were revelled in and a thoroughly happy time was spent. The chair was taken by the Missionary, who, towards the close of the programme, called upon the Rev. H. Bodell Smith to address the gathering. The Social was concluded by the singing of Whittier's hymn, "Dear Lord and Father of mankind," and the pronouncing of the Benediction."

The following day proved a "red-letter" day in the Mission year. The Annual Sermons were preached in the morning at the First Church, in the afternoon at the Mission, and in the evening at All Souls' Church, the special preacher at all three services being the Rev. H. Bodell Smith. The Mission scholars and choir sang specially selected hymns at each service. In the afternoon the Mission Church was well filled, the service being conducted by the Missionary. The attendances at the weekly services are well maintained, and the social and educational work of the Mission continues very favourably. In connection with the Girls' Club, entries are being prepared for the forthcoming Girls' Club Union Competitions.

Ballyclare. The Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Social, as well as that of the Sunday School, was held in the Meeting-house on February 24th. Although the evening was very stormy and cold, and extremely wet, and many of the friends are resident two or three or more miles from the town, there was a fair attendance of members, and the younger men and women were well represented, and there was a full muster of the Sunday School. After tea (served by the younger people) had been enjoyed, the chair was occupied by the Rev. Alex. Osborne Ashworth (Belfast), who had been invited by the Church Committee to attend. The hymn "All before us lies the way" was heartily sung, and the chairman offered prayer. He then read a message from the recent Minister, the Rev. P. Godding (now of Banbridge) conveying his "best wishes for a happy gathering." The Officers and Committee of Management for the ensuing year were then elected—a re-election in every case — after which the chairman spoke of position in the religious world the distinctive of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, and pointed out, to the younger people in particular, the various reasons why we are separate from other religious organisations, and emphasised the principle of Non-subscription, referring to the expulsion of our ministers in 1725 from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian (Orthodox) Church, on their refusal to sign (subscribe to) the Westminster Confession, and the formation of the present Presbytery of Antrim —with which Ballyclare Congregation is affiliated. He also spoke of the 2,000 clergymen of the Episcopal Church of England who for conscience sake in 1662, resigned their livings and came out of that Church with their wives and children without any prospect of the means of living, rather than be coerced into conformity with the (then) Established Church of England, and its exploded doctrines. He dwelt upon the precious heritage of religious freedom for which our forefathers laboured, fought and suffered, and urged his hearers to

" stand fast in the liberty " which had been so hardly earned and won by those past pioneers of a nobler faith. He then distributed the prizes (25 in number) to the Sunday School scholars, and there followed a full programme of instrumental and vocal music, recitations, reading and a sketch, in which members of the Choir and Organist and young people did themselves credit, and gave evidence of painstaking preparation, and afforded very much pleasure to everyone present. The social was in every way an enjoyable one, and successful, contributed to, as it was, by very willing helpers.

The officers are making what effort they can to increase the income by inducing members to add to their stipends, and hoping the younger people may enter the stipend list, and hope also that in the near future they may secure the services of a suitable minister. It is very important they should succeed in these laudable endeavours.

Banbridge.—At our last meeting of the Young People's Club a Presentation of a handsome pocket case was made to Mr. W. J. Radcliffe. After an enjoyable tea, Miss Dornan presented the gift with a very happy speech. She said how well known was Mr. Radcliffe's great interest in our club, how indefatigable were his labours for its welfare, and consequently how unanimous was the response when a presentation was suggested among the members. Mr. Radcliffe was taken completely by surprise, for the secret had been well kept, and he found a difficulty in expressing his gratitude. Like everyone else, he thoroughly enjoyed these gatherings, and certainly did not see that he had done anything to merit such a splendid gift with its accompanying kind thoughts! but he would always do all he could for the Club. Novel games, including guessing competitions, were then indulged in, and one of our most enjoyable meetings terminated after two or three good dances. The members of the dramatic section are now busy with rehearsals for the Farce (" Poor Pillicoddy, " where Mr. Radcliffe takes the name part) for the Congregational Social to be held on Friday, 15th April.

Dromore.—A very successful performance of comic opera, entitled "Aladdin and Out, " was given before a crowded audience on Thursday evening, February 24th, by a number of the young people connected with the Church and School. It was their first essay at opera as distinct from that class of musical play known as operetta, and hitherto chosen for the annual performance. "Aladdin and Out " is a rather elaborate production, occupying some two and a half hours, and at the rehearsals the performers felt that they were undertaking a task that might possibly prove beyond their powers. The applause, however, with which their efforts were greeted, and the words of praise and encouragement heard on every hand at the conclusion of the performance, must have quite dispelled the notion. Certainly no previous effort has evoked such hearty and spontaneous enthusiasm. The theme of the play, as indicated by the title, was the old oriental story familiar to young and old, but in modern setting and helped by pretty costumes, suitable stage effects, melodious songs and spice of fun and mirth. The cast was a long one, so that in a short notice, such as Mr. Editor desires, mention can be made only of some half dozen or more of the performers whose parts called for distinctness of rendering. The name-part was splendidly sustained by Miss M'Veigh, who showed a spontaneity of movement —a naturalness and grace—that were very attractive. She looked the part, and acted it to perfection. Her singing, too, was good. Miss D. Mulligan, who played the role of Mrs. Mustapha, Aladdin's mother, achieved a marked success. It was perhaps the most exacting part in the whole cast, but she proved herself equal to it, and her acting and impersonation all through shewed careful thought and study. Her " get-up " was perfect, both in the first part where, as a widow, she kept a laundry university, and taught " the art of washing linen," and later when she became " rich beyond the dreams of avarice," and presented her son at Court for the hand of the Emperor's daughter. As the Emperor Winky-Wum the Rev. A. Davison made an imposing figure, and seemed to enjoy himself

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immensely in spite of state worries. He had no queen to reign with him, but he had a lovely daughter, Phulmoun, whom he wished to marry to So-So, the Prime Minister's son, but later waved him off at the sight of Mrs. Mustapha's jewels in favour of Aladdin, provisionally on his building in three months the finest palace in the world, which of course he accomplished. Phulmoun (Miss C. Prentice), though a disobedient daughter, was a charming fiancee and acted delightfully, parti ularly in the scene where she and Aladdin and their companions concocted the plan for chloroforming Badmanazar, the wicked magician. Her singing parts were done with much taste and feeling. Mr. Mortimer M'Clughan's impersonation of Phatman, the cunning and crafty Prime Minister, was a very careful study. He shewed great ability, and with practice one prophesies that he will develop into a fine actor. His enunciation was clear and his "get-up" could not have been better. Mr. John Bailie gave an excellent account of himself in Badmanazar and sang well, but one felt that, as a wicked magician, he was not wicked enough looking. A judicious application of grease paint would have improved him immensely. Mr. Francis M'Veigh as So-So, the rejected suitor, hadn't very much to do, but what he did he did well, and his by-play during the singing of the love-song of Aladdin and Phulmoun was capital. The music was under the direction of Mrs. Ruddock, to whom acknoledgments are due, as also to Miss Kilpatrick who designed the costumes; to Mrs. Mulligan for valuable assistance in many ways; to Mr. Scott for help in painting the scenery, and to Mr. Kilpatrick who attended to the footlights.

Holywood—It is very gratifying to be able to report that, as a result of an appeal recently made to our young people, 30 new members and stipend payers have been added to our list. On Friday, March 18th, a Whist Drive and Dance was held in the King Edward Memorial Hall, when a gathering of about 130 spent a very enjoyable evening. For the complete success of the evening we have to thank a band of willing workers, and especially the ladies of the Sewing Meeting who had charge of the catering and decorated the Hall with evergreens and flowers.

Killinchy.—A social gathering took place in the Lecture Hall in connection with the annual meeting of the Congregation on Tuesday, February 15th, at 7 p.m. The Moderator, the Rt. Rev. G. L. Phelps, who was present for the occasion, having said grace, a large company of friends and members enjoyed a sumptuous tea provided by the ladies. This is now an annual function looked forward to by the members generally, and its popularity was evinced by the representative nature of the gathering. After tea, the annual business was transacted. The Treasurer, Mr Thos. Lindsay, presented the financial statement, which indicated a balance in hand of £25 17s. 8d. The balance sheet having been approved, the Committee were elected for the ensuing year, and the Treasurer and Secretary were re-elected. The Rev. D. J. Williams, who occupied the chair, in explaining the objects of the meeting, said that they met not merely for business, but also for social intercourse, to know each other better, and to realise more fully that they were a company of friends and brethren associated for a high purpose. While they worshipped together it was necessary to meet together socially in order to appreciate fully the possibilities of Christian life. He introduced the Moderator, who formally addressed the meeting in a felicitous speech which was heard with marked attention and approval. By means of a humorous story he enforced the truth that heaven is not ready made for us, but rather that we must work for it, and be alive and vigorous if we are to be fit for heaven and enjoy its blessings. A hearty vote of thanks to the Moderator for his address was carried by acclamation. Immediately afterwards the Moderator presented the prizes to the Sunday scholars for regular attendance. It is encouraging to note the high average of attendance at Sunday School. A miscellaneous programme, composed of songs, recitations and sketches was given. A happy evening concluded with the singing of the National Anthem and the pronouncing of the Benediction.

Larne and Kilwaughter—During the past, but not quite gone, winter our Congregational life was brightened by monthly meetings of our Unity Guild. With the exception of Mr. Rossington's much appreciated lecture on "The Pilgrim Fathers," the entertainments provided consisted mostly of simple drawing-room performances, competitions in mental ingenuity in many forms, and a sketch in which as none but lady members appeared and which was entitled "Lodgings to Let," was regarded as rather significant by single young men and their friends. Each meeting was arranged by a fresh Committee, so that interest was more widely diffused than hitherto, and it must be said ungrudgingly that the Committees deserve all congratulations and thanks. Mr. Rossington's lecture and items by the Larne Male Choir on the opening night, were the only contributions given by non-members of the congregation, and needless to say each meeting commenced with the cheering cup and ended with the not less cheering tripping on the "light fantastic toe."

Mountpottinger.—The annual meeting of the Congregation was held in the School-room on Friday, March 11th, when Rev. M. Watkins presided over a good attendance. Reports were submitted by the Church Committee and the Music Committee on the year's working, both being adopted as quite satisfactory. Financial statements were submitted by the Hon. Treasurers of the Church, Sunday School, Choir, and Sustentation Fund. The Church Accounts showed a small balance due to bank on the year, which was considered satisfactory enough, bearing in mind that the annual Xmas sale of work had not been held, owing to the big Bazaar fixed for April. The Sunday School and Choir Accounts both showed surplus on the year's working, but unfortunately the same could not be said of the Sustentation Fund, which finished the year with a balance due to the Treasurer. A strong appeal was made to the Congregation to rectify this at the earliest possible moment, and so subscribe that the Treasurer might be relieved of any anxiety. The various Officers were re-elected for another year, and in the Church Committee the only change was the substitution of Mr. Joseph Johnston for Mr. B. Kennedy (who has gone abroad), and the addition of Mr. J. Martin. Interest is now centred on the forthcoming Bazaar, in aid of the Memorial and Endowment Fund, concerning which further particulars will be found in our advertising columns.

Newry—The Sunday School Party was held in the Schoolroom on Wednesday, 23rd February, when there was a fair muster of scholars and young people. Tea was served by the Teachers, Mrs. Slipper, Miss S. Warnock and Miss E. Mitchell presiding at the tables. After tea, the tables were cleared and games were indulged in with much zest, by the children. At an interval Santa Claus appeared, having been long delayed on his rounds, and distributed gifts to all from a well laden tree. Mr. Warnock, the esteemed Superintendent, addressed the scholars, urging upon them the duty of being punctual and regular, and Rev. G. J. Slipper appealed to them to encourage their teachers, who did so much for them. Mrs. Henning distributed the prizes for good attendance, and at the close spoke a few words of encouragement to the scholars, both successful and unsuccessful. Games were then resumed, and after a most enjoyable evening, the party was closed with prayer, and the children went home happy and satisfied. The Congregation has recently lost some of its old and staunch members, no less than four having passed away within the space of a few weeks. Mr. J. Hamilton Little, who had reached more than four-score years, died on the 8th February, after a short illness. Throughout his life, except for some years in Scotland, he was a loyal member of the Congregation, and his reminiscences of the early years of his connection with the Church were very interesting. By the passing also of Mrs. Rowland, wife of Mr. Robert Rowland, another staunch friend of the Church from childhood has been removed from amongst us. Mrs. Rowland had reached the allotted span and for some months had borne patiently a severe illness, and despite medical skill and careful nursing, passed away on the 22nd February. Another member, Mrs. George Cowan, formerly the wife of

the late Mr. James Donnell, for many years sexton of the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, passed away on the 27th February after a long and painful illness, patiently borne. On the following day yet another member of a family long connected with the Church, Mr. Isaac Cowan, died after a brief illness in his 72nd year. In each case the funeral was conducted by the Rev. Geo. J. Slipper. The passing of these friends is a serious loss to the Congregation, but it is a call to the younger people growing up in our midst, and it is gratifying to know that a satisfactory response is being given by them.

Unity Guild. — The Unity Guild Dramatic Entertainment was held on Wednesday, March 9th, in Rosemary Hall. The programme consisted of Tableaux Vivants followed by two plays, viz., "Ideals" and "Dog Days," in which the following took part:— "Ideals": The Misses Ara. T. Montgomery, Elsie Russell, May Hall, Florrie Newman, Edith Malcolm and Mr. Hugh Erskine. "Dog Days": Mrs. E. R. Jackson, the Misses Florrie Newman, Winnie Barker, Dorothy Young and Mona Martin. Tableaux: Gipsy Encampment—The Misses Gertie Wilson, Ella Magee, Maisie Martin, Madge Jeffers, Ethel Martin and Nora Martin; Messrs. John Brown and Alexander Hunter, Kathleen Young, Cecil Wilkinson and Philip Rossington. Nursery Rhymes—Evelyn Wilkinson, Eileen Millar, Mildred Martin, Margaret Rossington, Betty Newman, Rhona Martin, Edna and Dolly Jeffers. Incidental music by Mr. J. H. Smith. Our thanks are again due to Mr. Will Rankin for the time and trouble expended by him in producing the plays. The net proceeds from this entertainment will be devoted to the Sustentation Fund of our churches.

The Annual Meeting will be held in the Central Hall, on Wednesday, April 13th, when a lantern lecture will be given by the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., entitled "Swiss Travels by Road and Rail."

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